

On board
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On board -
Oct 19 1917

Dearest Pa + Ma:-

Today is pretty rough and cold - and as the impromptu band plays "Over There" and other war songs I sit in the library with many others writing letters to be posted on our arrival.

The voyage has been somewhat trying in the past two days - before that it could not have been smoother. But now a northwest wind that is 1st cousin to a gale has been blowing for 12° and the result is a sea that would make launching

life boats - the quickest way to become
immortal. Such a sea makes the
operations of submarines less easy -
but we are in the danger zone now
and notice has been posted that
if you are careless enough to fall
overboard the ship won't stop to
fish you out - time is too precious.
This is a trip I wouldn't give up
for anything - I can't explain
why. I never thought I'd see
an heroic age - but when you
crawl up forward at night and
watch the water for you are

ploughing on into fog mines or perisopes and see the distant feeble gleam of another ship ahead, or when you see a huge steamer painted gray black yellow and green in huge zebra-lightning patterns so that you can hardly make out any details or say where it begins or ends - or when several other things occur to you during the day which can't be told about, and in days when the feeble glow of your wrist watch is deemed ~~too~~ ~~susceptible~~ sufficient cause for keeping off

the deck at night -- you realize
that the fabric of things is rather
thin in places. There is a certain
signal given for life boat drill - and
it is noted that in case we strike a
mine or rock this signal would
usually be preceded by the explosion!
We sleep in clothes tonight and tomorrow,
and wear kapok life preservers to lunch etc.

Yesterday a sudden and violent roll
of the boat broke enormous amounts of
the crockery 1st and 3rd class. and created
a most amusing moving picture scene
in the lounge and the smokers.

I was in the lounge - a man was playing the violin and two girls were playing checkers, others were reading etc. The accompanist fell off his stool hit the violinist in the knees: they made the rest of the room on their faces with the violin held as high above the general wreckage as possible. The checker game was hit by a wandering house-paloo and the players spent their time dodging tables and embracing posts. In the snooker all the poker money hurried across the room in

an avalanche followed by beer and cards cradoirs and finally men and tables. Once One very fat lieutenant put all his faith on the fixedness of a spittoon and stayed with it faithfully across the hall!

I have read Joseph Vance - for the first time any De Morgan. I found it not very interesting - I am not old enough to appreciate so much self-pitying retrospection nor the self consciousness of it.

The American Express Co's inefficiency
is responsible for my duffle bag's not
being in New York when I arrived
at the wharf - so I shall have
to wait in London till it comes.

The Unit people in Cambridge sh'd have
sent it earlier.

I can think of no more that's
fit to send along.

With love

Alan.